News & Updates

from the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project



December 2021



From the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project

Resource Reminders

COVID-19 Rapid Response Requests

Two years into the worldwide pandemic, the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (TX RPC) Project continues to develop accessible and accurate resources from health experts in the field. If you would like to request information on a public health topic, please complete the following form.

ACCESS FORM HERE

VIEW AVAILABLE HEALTH POLICY REPORTS

The Texas RPC Project resources are available on our website. We hope these resources are valuable to your respective offices.

- TX RPC Health Policy Resources (resources available to policymakers to provide facts and evidence on health-related topics)
- Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living Webinars (includes COVID-19 specific webinars)
- TX RPC Newsletters Archive
- Texas Legislative Bill Tracker
- Texas Child Health Status Reports and Toolkits

General COVID-19 Resources

The TX RPC Project is committed to promoting optimal health for all Texans. For further information and updates on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic,

the <u>Texas Department of State Health Services</u>, <u>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</u>, and <u>World Health Organization</u> provide masking and social distancing guidelines, as well as recommended best practices to limit transmission of the coronavirus.

Texas Research-to-Policy Updated Reports

UPDATED REPORT: Impact of COVID-19 on Food Insecurity Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project

Food insecurity among adults and children has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic due to rising levels of unemployment, poverty, and limited access to school nutrition programs because of school closures. Models predicted that 54 million Americans (16%) experienced food insecurity in 2020 compared to 37 million Americans (11.5%) in 2018, an increase of 17 million food insecure Americans due to COVID-19. Approximately 30.9% of Texas children were projected to be food insecure in 2020, compared to 21.6% of children in 2018. This report was updated on November 22, 2021.

Key Takeaways:

- Food insecurity among Texans has doubled from December 2018 (about 13%) to April-June 2020 (about 28%).
- At the current projected levels of 28% food insecurity in Texas, the annual estimated healthcare costs associated with lack of access to food in Texas is over \$11.1 billion.

VIEW THE UPDATED REPORT

UPDATED REPORT: Texas Child Health Status Report: Child Physical Activity

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living is developing a series of reports, *Healthy Children, Healthy State*, to raise awareness of child health risk factors to develop to develop new programs and actions, and to build on current initiatives in Texas. The Child Physical Activity in Texas one-pager showcases the current state of physical activity for children in Texas. This report was updated on December 2, 2021 using 2019-2020 Texas SPAN data.

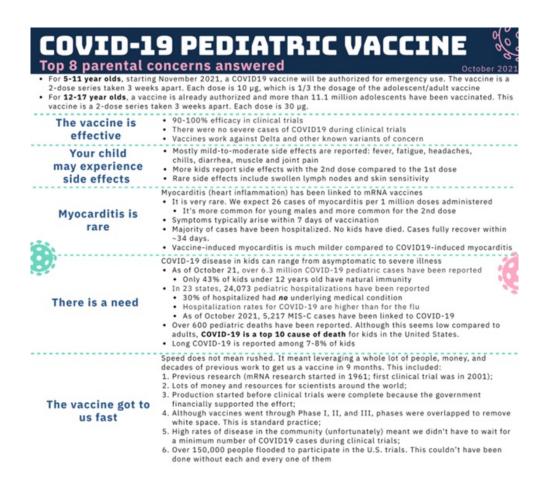
Key Takeaways:

- 80.4% of Texas youth do not meet guidelines of 60+ minutes of physical activity daily.
- Only 45% of middle schools allow students to use gym facilities and equipment outside of school hours.

Resources from TX RPC Members and Organizations

Pediatric Vaccines: Top 8 Parental Concerns Answered
Katelyn Jetelina, PhD, MPH - UTHealth School of Public Health in
Dallas

"Your Local Epidemiologist", a blog by TX RPC Project member Katelyn Jetelina, released a report to answer parents' questions related to the pediatric COVID-19 vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccines recently became available for children 5-11 years old. Click the link to view and print the report.



Key Takeaways:

- Clinical trials have shown the COVID-19 pediatric vaccine is 90-100% effective among 5 to 11 year olds.
- Messenger RNA (mRNA) cannot be used to alter DNA.
- Long term side effects from the vaccine, such as infertility, are not expected and are highly unlikely.

VIEW THE REPORT

Highlights from TX RPC Network Members Conducting COVID-19 Research

Omicron Variant Is On Its Way Catherine Troisi, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston

The Omicron variant has created concern around the world, with many countries closing their borders again as scientists continue to examine the severity of the new variant. When asked about health experts' concern about the Omicron variant, TX RPC Project member Dr. Catherine Troisi said "the concern is that we are seeing with this variant 30 mutations in the spike protein and that's the important part of the virus that attaches to cells and also that our bodies make immunity to". Dr. Troisi spoke about the importance of masks, which are not perfect, but do help to prevent infection because they "are an easy prevention to take". Health experts also recommend getting children ages 5-11 years old vaccinated because COVID has become one of the major vaccine-preventable causes of death in the U.S.

Key Takeaways:

- If everyone who can be vaccinated gets vaccinated, including children, the odds of transmission are lower
- Health experts worry about the potential for increases in infections due to the Omicron virus variant, and warn that therapeutics may not be as effective as for previous variants.

READ THE ARTICLE

More Than 75% of Texans Have COVID-19 Antibodies, Survey Say Eric Boerwinkle, PhD - UTHealth School of Public Health in Dallas

It is estimated that 75% of Texans have COVID-19 antibodies through vaccination or previous infection. However, experts state that people who are not vaccinated but have previously been infected with COVID-19 have fewer antibodies to fight COVID-19 compared to vaccinated individuals. Dr. Boerwinkle says that the Texas Coronavirus Antibody REsponse Survey (Texas CARES) data show that "vaccination may provide the highest level of protection, even for those who have had a prior COVID-19 infection and developed antibodies." The Texas CARES study had participants complete a short survey about their health, then participants had their blood drawn at three different time points for antibody testing. The study provides further insight into how long immunity from natural infection and vaccinations lasts.

Key Takeaways:

- Approximately 4,000 children between the ages of 5 and 19 participated in the Texas CARES study and 33% of those children had antibodies to the COVID-19 virus. Of those 33%, around 50% of children were asymptomatic.
- Almost half of parents (44.9%) reported that the pandemic negatively impacted their child's mental health.

READ THE ARTICLE

TX RPC Partner Events

WEBINAR: The 87th Legislative Session, Interim Opportunities, and Updates on the Fight Against Obesity

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living and Partnership for a Healthy Texas

Participants learned about the ongoing advocacy of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, whose mission is to combat obesity in the state via policy change. In this webinar, Dr. David Lakey and Joel Romo discussed the work of the Partnership, policy wins in the 87th legislative session, the work happening between legislative sessions, and what the landscape looks like for future efforts. Additionally, participants will hear an update on the Texas Research-to-Policy Project from Dr. Deanna Hoelscher, and the use of Texas SPAN data to provide information to decision-makers. Learn more about the Partnership for a Healthy Texas and get involved at https://partnershipforahealthytexas.org.

VIEW THE RECORDING

REPORT: Health Fits Into Every Day

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living & CATCH Global

Foundation

The Coordinated Approach To Child Health (CATCH) is a school-based health program that works to promote healthy food choices and physical activity in order to prevent tobacco use. CATCH transforms a child's environment, culture, and society through child health efforts across the educational experience: classroom, family, physical education, and food service. CATCH has proven to reverse childhood obesity in El Paso and Austin-based schools, and has been adopted by more than 8,500 schools in the United States and across the word. It is the most widespread and researched coordinated school health program in the world. Check out their infographic about healthy eating!



Kids who eat a healthy breakfast **every day** are more attentive and less disruptive in the morning, as well as have more energy to **play** and **learn**.



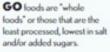


Serve breakfast **every day**. Kids should never skip **breakfast**. Not eating breakfast is like starting a car trip with an empty gas tank.

Eat more **GO** foods than **SLOW** foods every day and **WHOA** foods only every once in awhile! The most healthful breakfasts, GO breakfasts, are made up of mostly GO foods.









SLOW foods are between GO and WHOA foods.



WHOA foods are the most processed and are highest in unhealthy fats, added sugars, and/or salt.

Breakfast shouldn't have a lot of sugar, but many packaged breakfast foods sugary cereal, some yogurts, toaster pastries—can be loaded with it.

Avoid foods with added sugar or adding sugar to foods like cereal and oatmeal. Sugary or caffeinated drinks are not part of a healthy broakdant for kids.

VIEW THE INFOGRAPHIC

INFOGRAPHIC: Creating a Culture of Bicycling & Walking Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Creating a culture that is safe for walking and bicycling includes all aspects of the community: schools, businesses & worksites, media awareness, safety patrol, leadership, open streets & cyclovias, and infrastructure. Local leaders can promote walking and biking in ways that align with their existing policies, while media can promote "Open Street" events and provide bike safety education. Additionally, schools along "Open Street" routes can encourage communities members to learn how to ride their bikes safely. Check out the infographic on how you can help create a safer bicycling and walking culture!



VIEW THE INFOGRAPHIC

Recent Publications by TX RPC Researchers

COVID-19 Publications

Omer, S. B., Benjamin, R. M., Brewer, N. T., Buttenheim, A. M., Callaghan, T., Caplan, A., Carpiano, R. M., Clinton, C., DiResta, R., Elharake, J. A., Flowers, L. C., Galvani, A. P., **Lakshmanan, R.**, Maldonado, Y. A., McFadden, S. M., Mello, M. M., Opel, D. J., Reiss, D. R., Salmon, D. A., Schwartz, J. L., Sharfstein, J. M., & Hotez, P. J. (2021). Promoting COVID-19 vaccine acceptance: recommendations from the Lancet Commission on Vaccine Refusal, Acceptance, and Demand in the USA. *Lancet (London, England)*, S0140-6736(21)02507-1. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02507-1

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Teixeira, A. L., **Krause, T. M.**, Ghosh, L., Shahani, L., Machado-Vieira, R., **Lane, S. D.**, Boerwinkle, E., & Soares, J. C. (2021). Analysis of COVID-19 Infection and Mortality Among Patients With Psychiatric Disorders, 2020. *JAMA Network Open*, *4*(11), e2134969. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.34969

Non-COVID-19

Beauchamp, A. M., & **Jetelina, K. K.** (2021). Effects of Social and Occupational Stress, and Physical Strain on Suicidal Ideation Among Law Enforcement Officers. *Occupational Health Science*, 1-17. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41542-021-00103-7

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- Francis, J. K., Rodriguez, S. A., Dorsey, O., Blackwell, J. M., **Balasubramanian, B. A.**, Kale, N., Day, P., Preston, S. M., Thompson, E. R., Pruitt, S. L., & Tiro, J. A. (2021). Provider perspectives on communication and dismissal policies with HPV vaccine hesitant parents. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, *24*, 101562. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211335521002527
- Holcomb, J., Ferguson, G., Roth, I., **Walton, G.**, & Highfield, L. (2021). Adoption of an Evidence-Based Intervention for Mammography Screening Adherence in Safety Net Clinics. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 748361. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.748361
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Walker, T. J., Craig, D. W., Pavlovic, A., Thiele, S., Natale, B., **Szeszulski, J.**, DeFina, L. F., & **Kohl**, **H. W.**, **3rd** (2021). Physical Activity and Healthy Eating Programming in Schools to Support Student's Health-Related Fitness: An Observational Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(21), 11069. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182111069

Central Texas:

Janda, K. M., Ranjit, N., Salvo, D., Nielsen, A., Akhavan, N., Diaz, M., Lemoine, P., Casnovsky, J., & van den Berg, A. (2021). A Multi-Pronged Evaluation of a Healthy Food Access Initiative in Central Texas: Study Design, Methods, and Baseline Findings of the FRESH-Austin Evaluation Study. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(20), 10834. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182010834

About the TX RPC Project

The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (Texas RPC) Project is a non-partisan network that aims to bridge research and policy by supporting partnerships between child health researchers and policymakers.

Learn more online.

The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project team and overall network are available to support Texas policymakers with informational requests or resources related to health topics, during the interim and throughout the 2021 Legislative Session.

Contact Us

For more information, email <u>TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu</u>.

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